

# THE BOOK OF EXODUS.

## CHAPTER I.

### *Exodus i.*

1 Now these are the names of the children of Israel, which came into Egypt : every man and his household came with Jacob.

2 Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah,

3 Issachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin,

4 Dan, and Naphtali, Gad and Asher.

5 And all the souls that came out of the loins of Jacob were seventy souls : for Joseph was in Egypt *already*.

15 ¶ And the king of Egypt spake to the Hebrew midwives, of which the name of the one *was* Shiphrah and the name of the other Puah :

16 And he said, When ye do the office of a midwife to the Hebrew women, and they bare a son, then ye shall kill him ; but if it *be* a daughter, then she shall live.

17 But the midwives feared God, and did not as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the men children alive.

18 And the king of Egypt called for the midwives, and said unto them, Why have ye done this thing and have saved the men children alive ?

19 And the midwives said unto Pharaoh, Because the Hebrew women are delivered ere the midwives come in unto them :

20 Therefore God dealt well with the midwives : and the people multiplied, and waxed very mighty.

21 And it came to pass, because the midwives feared God, that he made them houses.

22 And Pharaoh charged all his people, saying, Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive.

**T**HE Book of Exodus or the Departure, so called because of the escape of the children of Israel from the land of Egypt, and their wanderings in the wilderness for forty years, are herein recalled.

The unparalleled multiplication of the children of Israel renewed Pharaoh's anxiety especially as the Israelites were very large and strong as compared with the Egyptians, and their numbers were computed to double every fourteen years. Hence their multitude and power grew more formidable day by day in the eyes of the Egyptians, though they feared their presence, yet as their labors added greatly to the wealth of the nation, they were unwilling to let them go. Pharaoh hoped by making their daily tasks much harder and killing all the male children at birth, they would be so crippled and dispirited that there would be no danger of rebellion against his government.

For a list of the seventy souls, turn to Genesis, chapter xlvi, where Dinah, Jacob's daughter, and Sarah, Asher's daughter, are mentioned among the seventy souls. It is certainly curious that there should have been only two daughters to sixty-eight sons. But perhaps the seventy souls refer only to sons, and the daughters are merely persons, not souls. It is not an uncommon idea with many nations that women have no souls. A missionary to China tells of a native who asked him why he preached the Gospel to women. "To save their souls, to be sure." "Why," said he, "women have no souls." "Yes they have," said the missionary. When the thought dawned on the Chinaman that it might be true, he was greatly amused, and said, "Well, I'll run home and tell my wife she has a soul, and we will sit down and laugh together." We find at many points that the Bible does not reckon women as souls. It may be that because there is no future for them is the reason why they punish them here more severely than they do men for the same crimes. Here it is plainly asserted that all the souls that came out of the loins of Jacob were seventy in number. The meaning conveyed may be that the man supplies the spirit and intellect of the race, and woman the body only. Some late writers take this ground. If so, the phraseology would have been more in harmony with the idea, if the seventy souls had emanated, Minerva-like, from the brain of father Jacob, rather than from his loins.

The children of Israel multiplied so rapidly that Pharaoh became alarmed, lest the nation should become mightier than the Egyptians, so he ordered all the males at birth to be slain. To this end he had a private interview with the midwives, two women, Shiphrah and Puah, and laid his commands upon them. But they did not obey his orders, and excused themselves on the ground that the Jewish women seldom needed their services. Here we have another example of women who "feared God," and yet used deception to accomplish what they deemed right.

The Hebrew God seemed to be well pleased with the de-

ception, and gave them each a house for their fidelity in saving the lives of his chosen children. Such is the plain English of the story. Origen ascribes a deep spiritual meaning to these passages, as more recent writers and speakers do, making the whole Bible a collection of symbols and allegories, but none of them are complimentary to our unfortunate sex. Adam Clarke says if we begin by taking some parts of the Scriptures figuratively we shall soon figure it all away. Though the midwives in their comfortable homes enjoyed the approbation of God, Pharaoh was not to be thwarted by their petty excuses, so he ordered his own people to cast into the river every Jewish boy that was born. We are so accustomed to the assumption that men alone form a nation, that we forget to resent such texts as these. Surely daughters in freedom could perpetuate family and national pride and honor, and if allowed to wed the men of their choice, their children would vindicate their ancestral dignity. The greatest block to advancing civilization all along the line has been the degradation of woman. Having no independent existence, no name, holding no place of honor or trust, being mere subjects in the family, the birth of a son is naturally considered more important than a daughter, as the one inherits because of sex all the rights and privileges denied the other.

Shiphrah and Puah, Aben Ezra tells us, were probably at the head of their profession, and instructed others in the science of obstetrics. At this time there were five hundred midwives among the Hebrews. This branch of the profession was, among the Egyptians, also in the hands of the women. Statistics show that the ratio of deaths among mothers and children at birth was far less than when under male supervision exclusively.

Moses spent the first forty years of his life in Egypt, the next forty with Jethro his father in law, and the next forty wandering in the wilderness. One writer said the Lord must have buried Moses, and no one ever knew where. There is no record of the burial place of Moses. As his life had been surrounded with mysteries, perhaps to verify his providential guidance in that long journey in the wilderness, he chose

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to surround his death also with mystery, and arranged with members of the priesthood to keep his last resting place a profound secret. He was well versed in all the law and mythology of the Egyptians, and intended the people should no doubt think that Jehovah had taken the great leader to himself. For the purpose of controlling his followers in that long journey through the wilderness, he referred all his commands and actions to Jehovah. Moses declared that he met him face to face on Mount Sinai, veiled in a cloud of fire, received minute instructions how to feed and conduct the people, as well as to minister to their moral and spiritual necessities. In order to enforce his teachings, he said the ten commandments were written on tablets of stone by Jehovah himself, and given into his hands to convey to the people, with many ordinances and religious observances, to be sacredly kept. In this way the Jewish religion and the Mosaic code were established.

As these people had no written language at that time, and could neither read nor write, they were fitting subjects for all manner of delusions and superstitions. The question naturally suggests itself to any rational mind, why should the customs and opinions of this ignorant people, who lived centuries ago, have any influence in the religious thought of this generation?

E. C. S.

## CHAPTER II.

*Exodus ii.*

1 And there went a man of the house of Levi and took to *wife* a daughter of Levi.

2 And the woman bare a son: and when she saw that he *was* a goodly *child*, she hid him three months.

3 And when she could not longer hide him she took for him an ark of bulrushes, and daubed it with slime and with pitch, and put the child therein; and she laid *it* in the flags by the river's brink.

4 And his sister stood afar off, to wit what would be done to him.

5 ¶ And the daughter of Pharaoh came down to wash *herself* at the river; and her maidens walked along by the river's side: and when she saw the ark among the flags, she sent her maid to fetch it.

6 And when she had opened *it*, she saw the child: and, behold, the babe wept. And she had compassion on him, and said, This *is one* of the Hebrews' children.

7 Then said his sister to Pharaoh's daughter, Shall I go and call to thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee?

8 And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, Go. And the maid went and called the child's mother.

9 And Pharaoh's daughter said unto her, Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give *thee* thy wages. And the woman took the child, and nursed it.

10 And the child grew, and she brought him unto Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. And she called his name Moses: and she said, Because I drew him out of the water.

15 But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh, and dwelt in the land of Midian: and he sat down by a well.

16 Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters: and they came and drew *water*, and filled the troughs to water their father's flock.

17 And the shepherds came and drove them away: but Moses stood up and helped them, and watered their flock.

18 And when they came to Reuel their father, he said, How *is it that* ye are come so soon to day?

19 And they said, An Egyptian delivered us out of the hand of the shepherds, and also drew *water* enough for us, and watered the flock.

20 And he said unto his daughters, And where *is* he? why *is it that* ye have left the man? call him, that he may eat bread.

21 And Moses was content to dwell with the man: and he gave Moses Zipporah his daughter.

22 And she bare *him* a son, and he called his name Gershon: for he said, I have been a stranger in a strange land.

THE account of the birth of Moses, his mother's anxiety in protecting him from the wrath of Pharaoh, and the goodness of the king's daughter, make altogether an interesting story, and is almost the first touch of sentiment with which the historian has refreshed us; a pleasant change from the continued accounts of corruption, violence, lust, war and petty falsehood, that have thus far marked the history of this people. The only value of these records to us is to show the character of the Jewish nation, and make it easy for us to reject their ideas as to the true status of woman, and their pretension of being guided by

the hand of God, in all their devious wanderings. Surely such teachings as these, should have no influence in regulating the lives of women in the nineteenth century. Moses' conduct towards the seven daughters of the priest at the well, shows that there were some sparks of chivalry here and there in a few representative souls, notwithstanding the contempt for the sex in general. These Hebrew wooings and weddings were curiously similar, alike marked for the beauty and simplicity of the daughters of the land, the wells, the flocks, the handsome strangers, the strong, active young men who will prove so helpful in cultivating the lands. The father-in-law usually gets the young husband completely under his thumb, and we hear nothing of the dreaded mother-in-law of the nineteenth century. If we go through this chapter carefully we will find mention of about a dozen women, but with the exception of one given to Moses, all are nameless. Then as now names for women and slaves are of no importance; they have no individual life, and why should their personality require a life-long name? To-day the woman is Mrs. Richard Roe, to-morrow Mrs. John Doe, and again Mrs. James Smith according as she changes masters, and she has so little self-respect that she does not see the insult of the custom. We have had in this generation one married woman in England, and one in America, who had one name from birth to death, and though married they kept it. Think of the inconvenience of vanishing as it were from your friends and correspondents three times in one's natural life.

In helping the children of Israel to escape from the land of Egypt the Lord said to Moses:

*Exodus iii.*

19 ¶ And I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not by a mighty hand.

20 And I will stretch out my hand, and smite Egypt with all my wonders which I will do in the midst thereof: and after that he will let you go.

21 And I will give this people favour in the sight of the Egyptians: and it shall come to pass, that, when ye go, ye shall not go empty:

22 But every woman shall borrow of her neighbour, and of her that sojourneth in her house, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment: and ye shall put *them* upon your sons, and upon your daughters; and ye shall spoil the Egyptians.

The role assigned the women, in helping the children of

Israel to escape in safety from bondage, is by no means complimentary to their heroism or honesty. To help bear the expenses of the journey, they were instructed to steal all the jewels of silver and gold, and all the rich raiment of the Egyptian ladies. The Lord and Moses no doubt went on the principle that the Israelites had richly earned all in the years of their bondage. This is the position that some of our good abolitionists took, when Africans were escaping from American bondage, that the slaves had the right to seize horses, boats, anything to help them to Canada, to find safety in the shadow of the British lion. Some of our pro-slavery clergymen, who no doubt often read the third chapter of Exodus to their congregations, forgot the advice of Moses, in condemning the abolitionists; as the Americans had stolen the African's body and soul, and kept them in hopeless bondage for generations—they had richly earned whatever they needed to help them to the land of freedom. Stretch the principle of natural rights a little further, and ask the question, why should women, denied all their political rights, obey laws to which they have never given their consent, either by proxy or in person? Our fathers in an inspired moment said, "No just government can be formed without the consent of the governed."

Women have had no voice in the canon law, the catechisms, the church creeds and discipline, and why should they obey the behests of a strictly masculine religion, that places the sex at a disadvantage in all life's emergencies?

Our civil and criminal codes reflect at many points the spirit of the Mosaic. In the criminal code we find no feminine pronouns, as "He," "His," "Him," we are arrested, tried and hung, but singularly enough, we are denied the highest privileges of citizens, because the pronouns "She," "Hers" and "Her," are not found in the constitutions. It is a pertinent question, if women can pay the penalties of their crimes as "He," why may they not enjoy the privileges of citizens as "He"?

E. C. S.

CHAPTER III.

*Exodus iv.*

18 ¶ And Moses went and returned to Jethro his father in law, and said unto him, let me go, I pray thee, and return unto my brethren which are in Egypt, and see whether they be yet alive. And Jethro said to Moses, Go in peace.

19 And the Lord said unto Moses in Midian, Go, return into Egypt: for all the men are dead which sought thy life.

20 And Moses took his wife and his sons, and set them upon an ass, and he returned to the land of Egypt: and Moses took the rod of God in his hand.

21 And the Lord said unto Moses, when thou goest to return into Egypt, see that thou do all

those wonders before Pharaoh, which I have put in thine hand: but I will harden his heart, that he shall not let the people go.

22 And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son, *even* my firstborn:

23 And I say unto thee, let my son go, that he may serve me: and if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, *even* thy firstborn:

24 ¶ And it came to pass by the way in the inn, that the Lord met him, and sought to kill him.

25 Then Zipporah took a sharp stone, and circumcised her son.

26 So he let him go.

WHEN Moses married Zipporah he represented himself as a stranger who desired nothing better than to adopt Jethro's mode of life, But now that he desired to see his own people, his wife has no choice but to accompany him. So Moses took his wife and his sons and set them on an ass, and he returned to the land of Egypt.

The reason the Lord met them and sought to kill the son, was readily devined by Zipporah; her son had not been circumcised; so with woman's quick intuition and natural courage to save the life of her husband, she skillfully performed the necessary operation, and the travellers went on their way rejoicing. The word circumcision seems to have a very elastic meaning "uncircumcised lips" is used to describe that want of power to speak fluently, from which Moses suffered and which he so often deplored.

As in every chapter of Jewish history this rite is dwelt upon it is worthy of remark that its prominence as a religious observance means a disparagement of all female life, unfit for offerings, and unfit to take part in religious services, incapable of consecration. The circumcision of the heart even, which women might achieve, does not render them fit to take an active part in any of the holy services of the Lord. They were per-



mitted to violate the moral code of laws to secure liberty for their people, but they could not officiate in any of the sacraments nor eat of the consecrated bread at meals. Although the Mosaic code and customs so plainly degrade the female sex, and their position in the church to-day grows out of these ancient customs, yet many people insist that our religion dignifies women. But so long as the Pentateuch is read and accepted as the Word of God, an undefined influence is felt by each generation that destroys a proper respect for all womankind.

It is the contempt that the canon and civil law alike express for women that has multiplied their hardships and intensified man's desire to hold them in subjection. The sentiment that statesmen and bishops proclaim in their high places are responsible for the actions of the lower classes on the highways. We scarce take up a paper that does not herald some outrage committed on a matron on her way to church, or the little girl gathering wild flowers on her way to school; yet you cannot go so low down in the scale of being as to find men who will enter our churches to desecrate the altars or toss about the emblems of the sacrament; because they have been educated with some respect for churches, altars and sacraments. But where are any lessons of respect taught for the mothers of the human family? And yet as the great factor in the building of the race, are they not more sacred than churches, altars, sacraments or the priesthood?

Do our sons in their law schools, who read the old common law of England and its commentators, rise from their studies with higher respect for women? Do our sons in their theological seminaries rise from their studies of the Mosaic laws and Paul's epistles with higher respect for their mothers? Alas! in both cases they may have learned their first lessons of disrespect and contempt. They who would protect their innocent daughters from the outrages so common to-day, must lay anew the foundation stones of law and gospel in justice and equality, in a profound respect of the sexes for each other. E. C. S.

CHAPTER IV.

*Exodus xii.*

12 For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast : and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment : I *am* the Lord.

18 And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye *are* : and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy *you*, when I smite the land of Egypt.

43 ¶ And the Lord said unto Moses and Aaron, This *is* the ordinance of the passover : There shall no stranger eat thereof:

44 But every man's servant that is bought for money, when thou hast circumcised him, then shall he eat thereof.

45 A foreigner and a hired servant shall not eat thereof.

46 In one house shall it be eaten : thou shalt not carry forth aught of the flesh abroad out of the house : neither shall ye break a bone thereof.

47 All the congregation of Israel shall keep it.

48 And when a stranger shall sojourn with thee, and will keep the passover to the Lord, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it : and he shall be as one that is born in the land : for no uncircumcised person shall eat thereof.

**I**N commemoration of this promise of the Lord's to pass over their homes in executing vengeance on the Egyptians, and of the prolonged battles between Jehovah and Moses on the one side, and Pharaoh and his Cabinet on the other, the Jews held an annual feast to which all circumcised males were summoned. The point of interest to us is whether women were disqualified, not being circumcised, or whether as members of the congregation they could slip in under the provision in the 47th verse, and enjoy the unleavened bread and nice roast lamb with the men of their household. It seems from the above texts that this blessed feast of deliverance from bondage must have been confined to males, that they only, could express their joy and gratitude. But women were permitted to perform a subordinate part in the grand hegira, beside carrying their respective infants they manifested their patriotism by stealing all the jewels of gold and silver, all the rich silks and velvets from their Egyptian neighbors, all they could carry, according to the commands of Moses. And why should these women take any part in the passover ; their condition remained about the same under all dynasties in all lands. They were regarded merely as necessary factors in race building. As Jewish wives or Egyptian concubines, there was no essential difference in their social status.

